

(Monroe Institute Blog – August 10, 2023)

RELEASING EXPECTATIONS ON MY FIRST DAY OF STARLINES VIRTUAL RETREAT

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The day had finally arrived! It was my first day taking Starlines Virtual Retreat. You'd think that after having taken Gateway Voyage, Lifeline and Exploration 27, I would know more about what I could expect from Starlines, but preconceived notions can be funny sometimes. I knew this virtual retreat had something to do with meditating while hearing actual sounds recorded in space. I knew there would be a small level of physics involved because after I took Lifeline with Franceen King, she told me that if I was interested in learning more about meditation on a physics-inspired level I should give Starlines a try. But as we sat down for that first day's introduction, and I was presented with the list of what this program was going to cover, I immediately felt surprised (in a good way!) and perhaps ... unprepared.

Once again, the Monroe Institute had blown my mind. I don't know why I'm still surprised when this happens, as you never really know what you will find on your journeys in consciousness, even if you think you do.

You see, on day one of Starlines, our instructors revealed that we would be going over many deep dives into the basics (and some not-so-basics) of astronomy and the electromagnetic spectrum to understand the images we would be seeing from the Hubble and James Webb telescopes. To my surprise, Starlines turned out to be part astronomy course, part meditation program, and *all* ground-breaking personal development for me! Never have I had a program teach me so much about one topic so quickly, and I felt lucky to be able to dive deeply into the subject of astronomy while meditating. Despite feeling immensely unprepared after that first slideshow introduction (I really like to study up on topics in advance), I was able to process what I was learning on a deeper and more intense level overall.

In fact, I think Starlines has become my favorite program that I've taken at the Monroe Institute thus far, because not only have I learned so much about myself, but also about how the greater universe around me works. I now have a deeper understanding of not just my own consciousness, but what that means relative to our known expanded universe, from our solar system to our galaxy to our supercluster to the supercluster Laniakea of which we are a part, and beyond.

The week I spent taking Starlines changed my outlook dramatically for the better. As I went through each exercise and meditated on the different parts of our known universe, I felt empowered by *collecting* parts of the universe for my own self-fortification. The perceptual shifts of these extremely expanded states allowed for spontaneous focus and drive toward larger-picture goals. With so many small problems happening around me in life, these perceptual shifts allowed me to see how I can change the world one small step at a time.

Many scientists and astrophysicists have said that technically we are all bits of stardust. The concept that we as people and all our thoughts could actually be parts of the universe self-actualizing was a game-changer for me in my meditation. A beautifully strange picture was painted before me, and I finally felt able to trust that the universe both knows what I need right now and works for me and my best interests without my having to push forward with all my strength. A good tactician knows when to push forward and when to fall back, and it's hard for me to allow myself the release to fall back. This program and its larger-picture goals finally helped me to fully understand the importance of this as well as how to allow it to happen.

I had no idea what I was getting into when I signed up to take Starlines. I thought it would be similar to other programs I had taken up until this point, but it turned out to be a significant up-leveling for me. I've ever experienced anything quite like this program, and I had no idea it would change my life and mindset so drastically. But that's what I love so much about the Monroe Institute. I came into it expecting a meditation program and—even after just that first day—was blown away by all the astronomical topics we would learn. In the end, I could never have imagined how much it would teach me about myself and our known universe overall.